

potential amendment for salary increases at the other entities of higher education. There was some talk by the community colleges to say, why don't we get on this also and get some significant money in for increases in salary to the community colleges? The decision was made that that probably was not the right avenue to approach, that the right avenue to approach was to come in, merely ask for what Governor Orr, in her initial budgetary recommendation to the Legislature, had suggested that we do and that is what we are doing with this particular amendment. Technical community colleges are every bit as important to the State of Nebraska and its future as the University of Nebraska, University of Nebraska at Omaha and the four-year state colleges. They provide a very valuable link in the overall educational structure of our state. They provide job training and job readiness...

SPEAKER BARRETT: One minute.

SENATOR WITHEM: ...for young people who choose to go on to some level of higher education but do not necessarily plan to continue on to a four-year school. We have talked numerous times on this floor about economic development and I know it's kind of a cardinal rule this session if you want to do anything from amend the budget, to pass a bill, to adjourn even, that you say the adjournment motion is designed to promote economic development and you get your votes to adjourn when you do that. But the technical community colleges are a genuine link in our whole economic development program. Again, the U.S. West statements about needing to move into a state that promotes education is very important. It has been quoted in the past. It's very applicable in this particular situation too. Our community colleges have been a link in economic development. The Appleton plant in Columbus, that was referred to previously, the Tempte plant in Wayne, which has been referred to previously, and other examples, community colleges act as partners to these businesses as they move in to provide training mechanism for those individuals that are going to be employed in these particular businesses. I think this is a very modest increase. It is not one where we are saying we are going to break from the trend, we are going to break from the pack, we need to take a bold step forward. What the community colleges are merely saying is, please don't leave us behind in the dust. When you are giving modest increases to all of the other divisions of state government and giving salary increases to all other state employees, please include the community colleges within that budget...within that budget request. With that, I